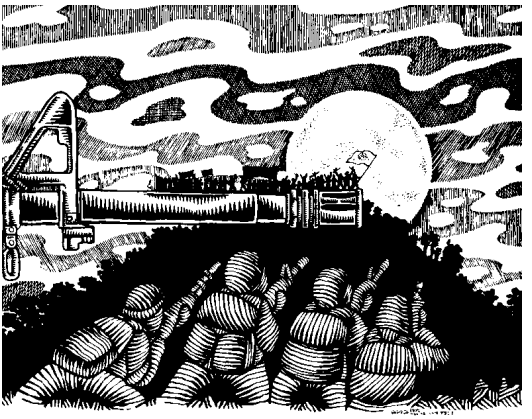
interviews



with the communist party of the philippines

PAO CHING-MING

Cover art by Ka Parts Bagani

Printed by Pao Ching-ming
Quezon City, the Philippines
July 2025

baojingming1968@gmail.com
pao-chingming.neocities.org

prefatory note

The interviews in this zine are with Marco Valbuena, Chief Information Officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The Philippines is an archipelagic, Third World country in Southeast Asia. It has 7,641 islands and some 115 million people. Most are peasants living off the land, most are landless and most are poor.

Land has always been of principal concern to the Filipinos. In precolonial times, land was by and large owned communally; the idea of private ownership came with Magellan in 1521. It took three more centuries of Spanish rule for to-day's haciendas, large tracts of land worked by peasants producing crops for export, to appear and for the Philippines to go from a self-sufficient backwater to an integral part of the world economy, its third-largest sugar exporter. The resulting hunger, dispossession and displacement led to revolution in 1896, then Asia's first republic in 1898. Seeing this, the United States (US) proceeded to invade the country, kill one out of every seven Filipinos, trying out in the process such newfangled tactics as the *campos de reconcentración*, and reëstablish the colonial yoke. Filipino resources fed American industry, and the Philippines became a convenient dumping ground for excess production. The haciendas, and everything associated with them, were here to stay.

The CPP maintains that nothing fundamental has changed since then. It points to the persistent issue of landlessness, which even the government recognises—there is an entire department dedicated just to agrarian reform. It points to all the US soldiers (often in their thousands) and military installations in a supposedly sovereign country, to that country's reliance on foreign debt and remittances from a disproportionately large diaspora to make up for chronic trade deficits, to the absence of any proper, independent industrial capacity and to so much else besides. This dispensation it calls

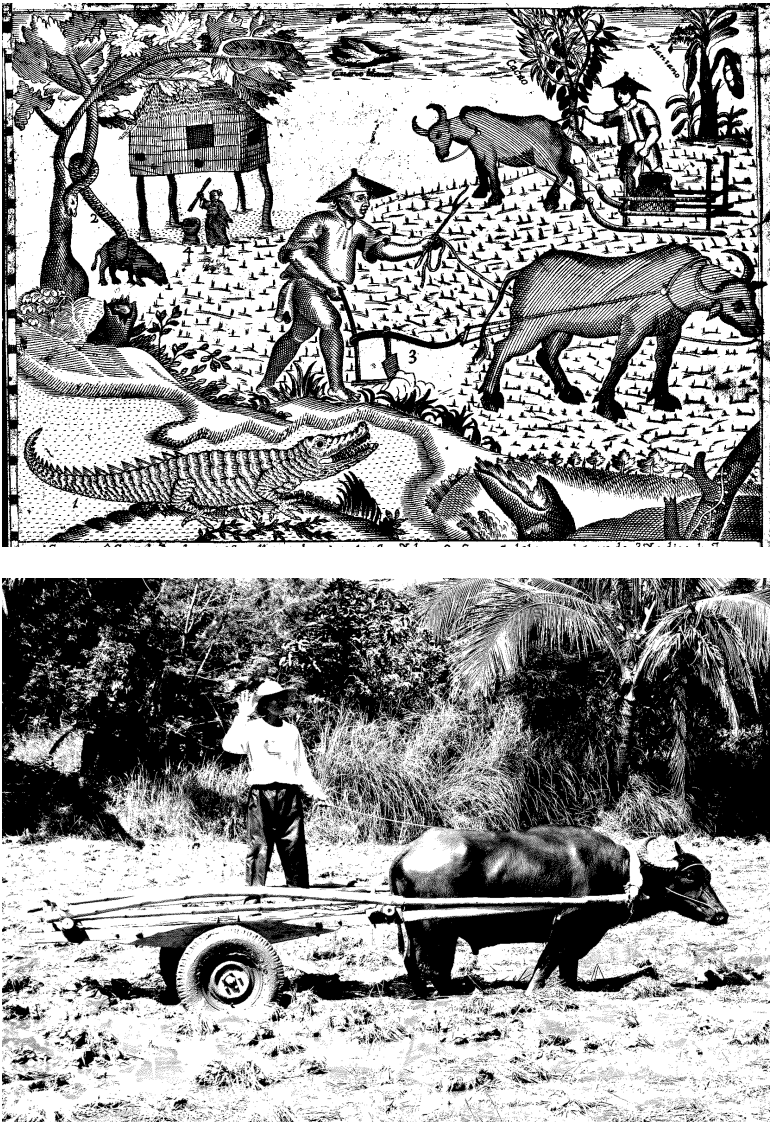
"semifeudal and semicolonial," and its alternative "national democracy," achieved through "protracted people's war": surrounding the cities from the countryside with a guerrilla army grounded in the basic worker-peasant alliance.

There is no question about the protractedness of the people's war. I did the first of these interviews when I was 14; the CPP has been waging armed struggle against the Philippine state for four times as long. 8 of the Philippines's 17 presidents have assumed office and left (or been overthrown, as in the case of Marcos, Sr.) without an end to what observers elsewhere call the civil war.

Figuring out the reasons behind that kind of longevity is a hard temptation to resist, hence these interviews. One is from 2021, the other from this year. They are by no means comprehensive, or even good in a technical (or in any) sense, but I do hope they shed some light on an organisation that the state paints as both on its last legs and *the* existential threat to Philippine democracy, oftentimes in one go. And perhaps, Ka Marco's answers can also explain why to some, the CPP is the Filipino people's *only* hope for genuine democracy. I don't know—I'm only the interviewer!

Thanks go to Ka Marco (*ka*, by the way, is a shortening of the Tagálog *kasáma*, or "comrade" in English) for agreeing to these interviews in the first place and for his warmth and sharpness in answering. I should also like to thank Jo Tanierla, a friend, comrade and incredible artist-organiser, for letting me include one of his paintings here. Two other comrade-friends deserve acknowledgement for their notes and encouragement. All errors are mine; the 2021 interview, in particular, can be blamed on my youth. I suppose you could say the same about the 2025 interview, but I'm not far enough removed from it yet to realise.

Pao Ching-ming
19 July 2025



THEN AND NOW. TOP: FILIPINO PEASANT WITH CARABAO, 1743, MURILLO VELARDE MAP. BOTTOM: FILIPINO PEASANT WITH CARABAO, 2014, PAMPANGA.

interview no. 1

N.B.—Originally published as "Revolutionaries are Eternal Optimists: An Interview with the Communist Party of the Philippines" in *Negation*, 7 July 2025: https://www.negationmag.com/articles/revolutionaries-are-eternal-optimists. This was supposed to be the first half of a two-parter, but answering the second set of my questions proved impracticable for Ka Marco due to time constraints and other considerations.

Pao Ching-ming: Ka Marco, this is the second time I am interviewing you. The first time was in 2021, on the occasion of the Communist Party of the Philippines's 53rd anniversary; the 56th is only a few days away as I write these questions. Tell me: what's changed since then? How are you, how is the Party, and, most importantly, how are the Filipino people?

Marco Valbuena: Significant changes have taken place over the past three years since our last correspondence, yet many aspects have remained the same. The most notable change, of course, is the return to power of the Marcos dynasty, accompanied by the rapid deterioration of the social and economic conditions of the Filipino people. The reign of state terror whipped up during the Duterte regime has remained, with grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law still being perpetrated with impunity by reactionary state forces.

On the occasion of its 55th anniversary, on December 26, 2023, the Party launched a rectification movement with the aim of consolidating and strengthening the Party through self-criticism and correcting past errors, weaknesses and shortcomings. According to the Party leadership, the rectification movement is firmly taking

root even if "much work remains to be done."

PC: It has been said that the revolutionary movement is "at its lowest ebb in decades." According to government figures, while in 2008 there were an estimated 1,381 villages "under the Communist movement's influence" (what could be meant by "influence" here?), in 2023 only some 200 remained. It is also claimed that from 81 guerrilla fronts in 2018, there is now only a single "weakened" one remaining.[1] In as exact terms as you can, could you verify these numbers for us? And would you say that the revolution has suffered a real, concrete decline these past years?

MV: The Party has described the losses and setbacks of the NPA due both to its internal weaknesses, principally, and the sustained strategic offensives of the enemy since 2017. However, the AFP's (Armed Forces of the Philippines) claims of the NPA having "only one weakened guerrilla front" is totally absurd. The NPA continues to operate from the northern regions of Luzon to the southern parts of Mindanao. Guerrilla units of the NPA are adapting their tactics to the changed military strategy of the enemy to render its offensives ineffective.

The Marcos regime's "insurgency-free" claims are belied by their own actions, particularly by the continuing massive military operations involving thousands of troops across the country, with huge expenditures running to hundreds of billions of pesos. By deploying massive numbers of troops and establishing their armed presence in rural villages, however, they succeed only in suppressing the people's democratic rights, but not without further rousing the masses' deep hatred of the fascist military. The more terrorist violence they unleash, the more resolute the peasant masses become in their determination to resist and fight back.

PC: If there has been such a decline, when and where did it begin? In the 1980s, the Party was "the most significant threat to the stability of the Philippine state and the hegemonic force on the Left,"[2] and the common narrative is that since then it has never really reached a similar high point. Statements sympathetic to the movement complicate the picture. In 2014, founding chairman Prof. José Ma. Sison claimed that the Party had 150,000 members and operated in 115 guerrilla fronts;[3] in 2015, he gave the figure of 200,000;[4] and in 2022, this had returned to 150,000.[5] Your latest anniversary statement, from 2023, indicates that the people's war is in the "middle phase of the strategic defensive,"[6] whereas as early as 2006, you were already "approaching and developing the middle phase of the strategic defensive."[7] So, once and for all, please give us a sketch of how the people's war has progressed since its inception in the late 1960s, with particular emphasis on its ebbs and flows, its retreats and advances, and the objective and subjective contexts in which those occurred.

MV: To understand the history of advances and retreats of the people's war in the past decades, it is crucial to understand that the middle phase is the longest phase of the strategic defensive stage. This phase comes after the early phase of launching or initiating the people's war and building the people's army as a nationwide force; and before the phase of rapid progress towards the stage of strategic stalemate. The people's war does not progress in a straight line. The middle phase, in particular, has been characterized by ebbs and flows, gains and setbacks. This is evident in the recent history of the people's war, as highlighted by the Party leadership. There was a steady advance during the 1970s up until 1987, major losses from 1988 to 1992, a general trend of advance from 1992 to 2017, and setbacks from 2018 to 2022. In the past year, some parts of the NPA suffered losses due to continuing internal weaknesses and the enemy's relentless offensives. However, other parts have made headway by redeploying

guerrilla units to counter the enemy's strategy. This has allowed them to effectively resist and frustrate the enemy's focused military operations.

PC: Last year, the Central Committee took advantage of the Party's 55th anniversary to call "on the entire Party to wage a rectification movement on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the Party's basic principles as enunciated by Ka Joma."[8] How has this Third Rectification Movement, as it has come to be called, been going? In what ways is it similar or different from previous struggles for rectification? Notably, why no "Great," as in the First and Second?

MV: The current rectification movement is in many ways similar to the first and second, in so far as it upholds Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as the the Party's ideological guide, and reaffirms the basic analysis of Philippine society as semicolonial and semifeudal and the need to wage a people's democratic revolution through protracted people's war, along the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside. It is also similar in that it calls for a study campaign to raise the theoretical level of the Party as a way of raising its capability to apply Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as guide to advance revolutionary practice.

On the other hand, the current rectification movement is also different from the first and second rectification movements. The first two rectification movements arose from a situation in which the basic ideological line, principles, and program of the Party were systematically questioned, distorted, and attacked by people who later became out and out revisionists and traitors. The current rectification movement, on the other hand, arose from a situation in which the malady of empiricism slowly weakened the overall grasp of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and weakened the Party internally. This situation allowed various types

of petty-bourgeois subjectivism to exist, resulting in mistaken ideas to exist alongside correct ideas, becoming a hindrance to further growth.

Since launching the current rectification movement, the Party has intensified efforts to root out and repudiate petty-bourgeois subjectivism in all its forms. Party cadres and all revolutionary activists are determined to make this ideological campaign a success, ensure that the current rectification movement is as great as, or even greater than, the first two, to surpass all past achievements and bring the revolution to unprecedented heights.

PC: Also last year, the Party declared a holiday ceasefire—the first one since 2019, under Duterte—as what I understand to be a gesture of goodwill towards the government, with whom the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) agreed "to a principled and peaceful resolution of the armed conflict"[9] last November in Oslo. Notably, the government did not reciprocate. Was there any hope that they would? Why was a holiday ceasefire possible then but, as you have asserted in a recent statement, not this time?

MV: The Party issued a ceasefire declaration in December 2023 without expectation that it would be reciprocated by the Marcos government. It was a gesture of solidarity with the Filipino people's traditional holidays, as well as a way of marking the 55th anniversary of the CPP. It was also an affirmation of the Party's support for the efforts of the NDFP to resume peace negotiations with the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines), after the signing of the November 23, 2023 Oslo Joint Declaration. The AFP, however, treacherously took advantage of the NPA's ceasefire and staged attacks against NPA units, targeting civilian communities. In the face of the unremitting armed offensives of the AFP and without clear prospects of

peace negotiations progressing under Marcos, the Party could not declare a holiday ceasefire last December 2024, as much as it wanted to.

PC: Regarding its counterinsurgency tactics specifically, what, in your opinion, has the Marcos régime done "right"? And, conversely, where has the revolutionary movement gone "wrong"?

MV: Marcos continues to wrong the Filipino people by waging the ruthless US-supported and -funded counterrevolutionary war. He has ordered the AFP to escalate its campaigns of gradual constriction, which since 2017 has overrun wider areas, intensifying oppressive military operations lasting years, unleashing superior aerial, artillery and infantry firepower, and inflicting grave hardships on the peasant masses. The AFP took advantage of the problem of self-constriction of some guerrilla units of the NPA. Some NPA units were induced to further self-constrict instead of spreading and shifting to widen the area for guerrilla maneuver and base building. This problem is presently being surmounted by the NPA. Its guerrilla units are now more mobile and agile, making them less vulnerable to enemy encirclement, leaving the enemy deaf and blind.

PC: While we're at it, would it still be accurate to call it the "Marcos-Duterte régime"? Or should Duterte be struck out given her seemingly diminishing power in government vis-à-vis the Marcos-Romuáldez clique?

MV: The collusion between the Marcos and Duterte ruling cliques has given way to conflict, which has become increasingly irreconcilable and antagonistic since 2023, just one year after putting up the façade of unity. Since Marcos assumed power in 2022, the Party always referred to the ruling regime as the "Marcos regime" or "US-Marcos regime," to underscore that Marcos is the

one who principally wields reactionary political power. It only once referred to the ruling regime as Marcos-Duterte in 2023 to underscore its fascist-terrorism. For all intents and purposes, the reins of political power have been in Marcos' hands since 2022, with the Dutertes being less and less accommodated.

PC: How do you view the whole conflict between Marcos and Duterte? Is it, as a few people have put forward, a sham, or a genuine struggle between two competing factions of the ruling class? If it is the latter, then why is Marcos so unwilling to go the full way and move for Duterte's impeachment? If in fact the two are colluding with each other in some scheme to deceive the Filipino people, then what might their ends be?

MV: The conflicts between the Marcoses and Dutertes are real and intense, involving control over hundreds of billions of pesos worth of government contracts, as well as influence and control over the armed forces and police. Despite promises of accommodation, the Dutertes since 2022 have lost billions of pesos in bribes and kickbacks in state infrastructure projects (such as the Mindanao railway and a few other big-ticket projects) which Marcos renegotiated and re-awarded to other foreign banks and local contractors by the second half of 2023. During this time, Duterte's influence in the military had begun to wane with the retirement of generals he had appointed to key positions. Since stepping down and having to give up command of the military and police, Duterte lost complete overlordship of the drug trade and other criminal syndicates. In fact, he is now being investigated for the drug killings, and for allowing the proliferation of POGOs (Philippine offshore gaming operators) as fronts for criminal operations during his term.

You are right to observe that, despite his declaration that he will reciprocate ("papatulan") Sara Duterte's assassination threats, Marcos appears to be dilly-dallying

with her impeachment, likely calculating how much influence the Dutertes have within the military who might be triggered by an impeachment. Others surmise that Marcos is waiting for the 2025 elections to secure a majority in the Senate to ensure that the impeachment trial will result in a conviction against Sara Duterte. Having regained political power close to 40 years after being ousted, we can expect the Marcoses to seek to perpetuate their power beyond 2028, and aim to eliminate all stumbling blocks, including the Dutertes.

PC: How can the legal, aboveground national-democratic Left take advantage of these apparent splits among the powers that be? Would it be possible for the Makabáyan Coalition to unite the rest of the Left and the Liberal Opposition behind it in an effort to impeach Duterte?

MV: For the Filipino people, the conflict between the Marcoses and Dutertes is one between bureaucrat capitalists and fascists for control of political power. They should take advantage of the conflict to pursue their demand for justice. Without siding with the Marcoses, they stand on just ground in pushing to have Rodrigo Duterte arrested by the ICC, and to have Sara Duterte impeached and tried for corruption. Indeed, the mass-based opposition represented by Makabayan and other political parties including the Liberal Party can unite in pushing for the impeachment of Sara Duterte, as well as for Rodrigo Duterte's arrest and trial before the ICC.

PC: Some commentators claim that a Marcos-dominated government is better than one dominated by Duterte, citing Marcos's "softer hand" and "more liberal" leanings. Under Duterte, they argue, it would be rabid and unbridled fascism, whereas under Marcos progressive forces at least have some leeway to be critical, do mass work, and so on. How do you respond?

MV: There is nothing "soft" or "liberal" with the Marcos regime. Like his predecessor, and like his father, Marcos is waging a ruthless and brutal war of suppression marked by wanton violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, both in the cities and countryside, but more so in the rural communities. Marcos utilizes the Anti-Terror and Terrorism Financing laws to suppress democratic rights, further narrowing the space for legal resistance. He uses military agents to conduct surveillance against union leaders, community associations, organizations of students, church people, women and other democratic sectors. He continues to use the NTF-ELCAC (National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict) as a tool for political repression and fascist propaganda.

Marcos has avoided the acerbic anti-communist rhetoric of Duterte, but has adapted the same tactics of state terrorism to suppress and oppress the Filipino people. Marcos employs deception to erect a façade of magnanimity and unity to conceal his tyrannical schemes. He is a political sly who is now busy consolidating his power. He is tightening his grip on the military, congress, bureaucracy and judiciary, and further reinforcing the tyrannical state. Marcos' aim is to monopolize political power, expand the family wealth and perpetuate the Marcos dynasty.

However, Marcos is bound to shed this "soft" public persona when he faces a growing protest movement that is certain to rise as widespread corruption is exposed, and as people suffer from worsening socioeconomic hardships resulting from his anti-people and anti-poor neoliberal policies.

PC: Many observers have noted Makabáyan's unprecedented participation in the coming senatorial elections: the last time the national-democrats fielded their own candidates for the Senate was in 1987, with the

Partído ng Báyan, and that failed miserably (not without the help of massive fraud and terrorism on the part of Aquino et al.). How do you look upon Makabáyan's campaign?

MV: I don't think that Partido ng Bayan "failed miserably" in 1987, unless one takes a limited view of electoral struggles as focus in the overall struggle for national democracy. In fact, the PnB mounted such a successful electoral campaign in 1987 that the reactionary ruling classes employed the full force of the military to suppress it. From a broader perspective, the 1987 PnB campaign opened the field of electoral politics as a new field of political struggle for the national democratic forces, even if it took them more than a decade to make headway with their participation in the party-list elections in the early 2000s.

The decision of the Makabayan bloc to field an almost full slate in the upcoming elections was welcomed by the broad masses of the people. The toiling masses have long grown tired of the same faces of reactionary politicians representing old political dynasties who for generations have wielded political power to perpetuate their power and privileges and oppress the people. Workers, peasants and other basic sectors see the participation of Makabayan as an opportunity to discuss and seek solutions to their pressing problems, especially amid the deepening economic crisis caused by Marcos' anti-people and anti-poor policies.

Of course, Makabayan is up against the reactionary goliaths. This, however, should not stop them from carrying out an all-out campaign to draw votes, build their chapters to organize and mobilize the people in great numbers, and forge alliances, along the general line of defending the people's rights and welfare and fighting for their national democratic aspirations. Their success will be measured in terms of votes, but equally important, in terms of building their organized strength for even

greater struggles in the future, both in and outside the field of elections.

PC:. Have these parliamentary squabbles had any effect at all on the régime's campaign of counterrevolution in the countryside? How about the revolutionary movement itself?

MV: I assume you refer to the squabble between the Marcoses and Dutertes. While the Marcoses and Dutertes squabble over the loot of the bureaucrat capitalist state, they are basically united in the counterrevolutionary aim of suppressing the resistance of the oppressed and exploited classes.

PC: Let us take a broader view. Would it be fair to say that the Marcos camp is basically representative of US interests in the Philippines and the Duterte camp of Chinese interests?

MV: I think the dynamics are more nuanced than that. While Marcos has been more brazen in his subservience to US economic and military interests in the Philippines, Duterte, during his time, did not actually stand against US imperialist domination in the country. Despite his occasional anti-US rhetoric, he actually allowed the US to construct its first four Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites, and allowed the US to establish in Western Mindanao the base of the Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P) in 2017 (after the Trump visit). Of course, Duterte sidled up to China hoping to get a share of the multibillion dollar Belt and Road Initiative, although he was already quite late in the game, as the Chinese economy began to reel from debt defaults. China is also wary of investing billions of dollars in the Philippines in the face of rising US protectionist push that extends to securing its semicolonies such as the Philippines.

PC: Speaking of the US and China, what is your perspective on events abroad this past year? What is the Party's analysis of, for example, the recently attempted coup in South Korea and the "dirty war" that may still happen against the North? What is the likelihood of such a war and how might it involve the Philippines?

MV: The world is currently entangled in rising inter-imperialist conflict, driven by the aggressive push of the US to reassert its dominance as the sole imperialist superpower amid economic stagnation and crisis. The US is increasingly bellicose as it seeks to redivide the world in line with its own interests, threatening to upend the current balance.

The attempt to impose martial law in Korea is an indication of the increasing push to the Right or a return to open fascist rule amid rising social discontent among workers and people. The failed attempt shows the high level of political consciousness and militance of Korean workers, with the biggest unions leading the resistance and pushing the parliament to impeach the president. The crisis saw the active intervention of the US imperialists as they sought to placate the people's anger against the US puppet, by allowing it to be replaced by another puppet. It made sure that references to the US military and nuclear power in Korea be stricken out of the articles of impeachment.

Through its military bases in South Korea where missiles with nuclear warheads are stockpiled, the US continues to threaten the DPRK with war. With the experience of having used its proxies such as Ukraine against Russia and Israel against Syria and Iran, the US is certainly emboldened to reignite the war in the Korean peninsula and use South Korea as proxy against the DPRK. I won't go into prospects at the moment, but I think there is urgency for people around the world to stand up firmly against such threats of war. It is critical

for the American people, in particular, to rise in protest against US war policies around the world.

PC: Some have noticed that there is a seeming continuum of ongoing conflicts stretching from the Crimea to the western tip of Arabia: Russia against the Ukraine, the US-Israeli campaign of mass terror and genocide against the Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Iranian peoples, and the futile attempts by the US to dislodge the Yemenis from the Red Sea. Do you think such a continuum does exist? If so, what is its basis for existing and what are its repercussions upon the liberal "rules-based international order"? Does such an order still exist?

MV: As pointed to above, the common thread in all these conflicts is the US push to redivide the world in line with its aim of establishing its hegemony around global regions. In doing so, it has undermined its imperialist rivals and attacked countries assertive of their national sovereignty and fueled armed conflicts.

Presently, the US is waging wars or proxy wars in Eastern Europe (using Ukraine against Russia), in the Middle East (using its alliance with Israel against Iran, also in establishing its foothold in Syria after the ouster of the Assad regime by US-Israel-Turkey-NATO supported armed groups) and in Asia (using the Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan and others to increase its military presence, encircle and contain China, and raise the temperatures of armed conflict).

PC: Do you subscribe to the notion that 7 October, when Hamas and other Palestinian revolutionary groups launched the first invasion into Israeli territory since 1948, was a (if not the) turning point in modern history, exposing the Zionist entity for its genocidal and settler-colonialist character and forcing US imperialism's hand,

either in support of the Israeli-led Holocaust (which would destroy any pretence of international rules-based liberalism) or against it (directly contravening its decades-long policy of aggression and exploitation in the Middle East)?

MV: The October 7, 2023 Al-Aqsa Flood was a reassertion of the historical right of the Palestinian people over their land. It is a new nodal point in the Palestinian people's continuing history of armed and non-armed resistance over the course of the past seven decades since the Zionists occupied their land and carved out the Jewish state of Israel. The response of the Zionists to the Al-Aqsa Flood is marked by gross brutality unprecedented in scale since Al Naqba.

The US has never made pretenses in its support for the Zionist genocide of the Palestinian people. By providing the Zionists with close to $18 billion in military aid since October 2023, the US imperialists have blood on their hands, with the lives of over 45,000 Palestinians lost in one of the most brutal wars in modern history.

PC: Does the Party have relations, fraternal or otherwise, with any of the groups currently involved in the struggle for Palestinian liberation?

MV: The Party has long supported the revolutionary and democratic organizations of the Palestinian people in their revolutionary struggle for national freedom and self-determination.

PC: How does the Party see Iran, Russia, China, North Korea, and similar states? (Which is to say, states which at least seem to stand opposed to US imperialism.) From all the contradictions between them and the US, might there come a Third World War? What would the character of such a war be? And again, what would the

consequences for the Filipino people be?

MV: The Party calls for establishing an international united front against US imperialist wars, war provocations and threats of war. The Party considers the revolutionary movements fighting wars for national liberation, including those in the Philippines, India, Turkey and other countries as the core of this united front. The alliance and solidarity of people's movements waging anti-imperialist resistance form the broader core of this united front. This anti-imperialist united front can be further broadened to include states defending their countries' sovereignty, including the DPRK, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, and other countries across Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. They must take advantage of splits among the imperialists, not only between the US and its main imperialist rivals China and Russia, but also between the US and its imperialist allies in NATO.

PC: Could the US use the senatorial elections next year to push for further militarisation of the Philippines as part of its plan to counter and entrap China? How? What could its other means be, and what are its means at present?

MV: Overall, the Philippine Senate has been supportive of the Marcos regime's foreign policy of subservience to the US. It has, so far, expressed no resistance to increasing US militarization of the Philippines, as well as the US push to bring in the military forces of Japan, South Korea, Australia and its NATO allies into the South China Sea.

PC: Besides militarily, what are the other ways in which US imperialism is deepening Philippine dependence on and subservience to the US?

MV: The US continues to use economic, political and cultural means to reinforce its dominance in the Philippines. There is a renewed push to expand the operations of US companies in the country, particularly in so-called green projects, to expand the market for US monopoly capitalists. An example would be the US push to promote "modular nuclear power," as well as expansion of solar power farms that are financed by US banks. At the same time, the US is leading a psychological warfare campaign to fuel Sinophobia among Filipinos, a tactic aimed at manipulating public opinion in favor of the US.

PC: Relatedly, can the country still be called semifeudal? Is it still, as in the words of nationalist economist Alejandro Lichauco, a "raw-material economy"[10]? A few facts to consider: (1) the service sector is now the biggest in the economy, continuing to prosper to the literal and quantitative detriment of agriculture and manufacturing, both in consistent decline; (2) the peasantry as a class is also in decline, falling from 75 to 80 percent of the population when Philippine Society and Revolution was written to a mere 50 to 60 to-day; and (3) the class in most conspicuous growth is neither the industrial proletariat nor the peasantry, but the service-based proletariat—those in call centres, malls, tourist destinations, and so on. It would seem to some that instead of raw materials, labour has become the principal export of the neocolony, especially given what is among the proportionally largest diasporic populations in the world (over 10 percent of all Filipinos are overseas). What is the Party's analysis? If the Philippine is still semifeudal, how does it account for the decline of the peasantry and of agriculture? Does it agree that among the neocolonies, the Philippines occupies a unique position as primarily an exporter of labour rather than an exporter of natural resources? If so, how does it explain this?

MV: The mode of production in the Philippines remains semicolonial and semifeudal. The local economy remains

non-industrial, agrarian and backward. Production is principally geared towards exports of agricultural products and other raw materials. There are no basic and strategic industries. The country is not on the path of capitalist development.

There are no basic and independent industries capable of producing both commodities for consumption of the local population, as well as capital goods necessary for expanding production. What the reactionaries boast of as "industrial production" in the Philippines are actually semiprocessing or assembly plants and do not constitute industrialization. These are largely concentrated in the labor enclaves and form part of the global assembly line (the so-called "global value chain") of multinational corporations. For the most part, these are divorced from the rest of the economy.

There has been no genuine land reform and land remains in the hands of big landlords or big bourgeois compradors and its foreign capitalist partners. Agricultural production remains mostly manual and small-scale in the main crop lines of rice, corn, coconut, and backward even in rubber, pineapple, and oil palm plantations. The country remains an exporter of raw materials. The Philippines' biggest exports are still fruits (bananas) and mineral ores, along with assembled electronic products, wiring, vehicle parts and other semiprocessed import-dependent semimanufacturers that are part of the international division of labor of multinational corporations. (Of course, in trade, we do not actually count labor as exports, in the same way that we count bananas, as "labor" is not a commodity produced by any industry.)

We must critically analyze the purported relative rise of the "service sector" and relative decline of manufacturing and agriculture. In a capitalist system, the service sector is generally a subsidiary to the production sector. The service sector includes transportation, distribution, logistics, sales, finance and other

occupations that are auxiliary and derivative to the direct production of commodities and value. This capitalist dynamic is not evident in the Philippines, where the so-called "service sector" is largely a hodgepodge of informal occupations that the vast army of unemployed are forced to create in order to survive the country's chronic economic crisis.

Philippine official statistics have given up efforts in previous decades to conjure the illusion of a growing industrial sector relative to agriculture, and are now trying to create the notion of an economy that is neither industrial nor agrarian. This is a vain attempt to put to question the Marxist analyst of the Philippine economy as semifeudal. There is statistical dishonesty and distortions, such as counting odd jobbers, domestic helpers, unpaid family workers and other elementary occupations as service workers to bloat the service sector. (Note here that BPO workers, who are also part of the functions of foreign mulitinational corporations, form only a small percentage, roughly 7%, of the "service workers." Also, sales workers actually serve as distributors principally of imported goods, not locally produced commodities). These statistics are actually evidence of gross aberrations of the semicolonial and semifeudal system, and the continuing deterioration and destruction of productive forces. It indicates the large number of people economically displaced (rendered unproductive) who are counted as employed for merely eking out a living. The even larger mass of idled labor are the rural semiproletariat, who remain bound to the natural economy, and are usually uncounted.

PC: What do you think the endgame of US imperialism is in the Philippines given its current economic policy? A purely service-based economy? Call centres for ever and ever?

MV: With the protectionist thrust of the US since 2008, in an effort to revive local industrial production, US

imperialism has been further pushing the Philippines to serve as a source of raw materials, particularly for mineral resources, and dumping ground for surplus commodities.

PC: Would you say that the national bourgeoisie is still a vital force and a necessary part of the Philippine revolution? Is it still possible for this class to achieve such gains as it did under President García, when the "Filipino First" policy stimulated industrialisation to a limited extent before being snuffed out by US imperialism? Or, as the world imperialist-capitalist system descends deeper into terminal decline, does this class become weaker and weaker, more and more peripheral?

MV: The national bourgeoisie suffer under the weight of imperialist domination, made more oppressive under the neoliberal policy regime of the past four decades. They survive and continue to assert in certain cracks and crevices of the economy that have not been reached by imperialist and big bourgeois comprador operations or which are viable only for middle or national bourgeois operations. These include small-scale food processing, retail trade in provincial town centers, manufacturing of local traditional commodities, e.g. including some household items, even as they contend with the weight of import liberalization. Indeed, with the deepening crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal system, the national bourgeoisie are more and more subsumed as peripherals of big bourgeois comprador operations, and are increasingly politically neutralized. However, a resurgence of the national democratic movement in the face of a sharpening downturn in the economic crisis will surely embolden the more Left section of the national bourgeoisie to lend their voice in the people's demand for genuine national industrialization.

PC: Theoretically and practically speaking, how is the petty bourgeoisie defined in the local context? *Philippine*

Society and Revolution (PSR) includes salaried professionals in this class, but shouldn't they be considered proletarians on account of their being wage-earners?

MV: The PSR has sufficiently defined the petty bourgeoisie as the segment of the local bourgeoisie that "possesses the smallest amount of property" who are "mainly characterized by relative economic self-sufficiency accruing either from the ownership of a small amount of productive means or the possession of some special training or skills..." Salaried professionals, including office clerks, employees, technical workers, and others who have acquired special skills through education or training, belong to this class. They are exploited in that they do not get a fair share of the profits of their employers and are not paid enough to compensate for their cost of living, but not in the way that the industrial proletariat are exploited through capitalist extraction of surplus value. Although oppressed, the petty bourgeoisie enjoy a higher and more stable standard of living relative to the proletariat, which form the basis for their characteristic political vacillation. However, the economic gap between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie is rapidly closing due to wage suppression and high cost of living which pull down the relative social standing of the petty bourgeoisie, particularly its lower and middle strata. As a result, the petty bourgeoisie are becoming even more receptive to revolutionary ideas and calls to action.

PC: A common anti-Communist talking point is that the leadership of ostensibly proletarian movements is very often not proletarian at all. Mao, for instance, was educated (in a country where at most 10 percent of the population was literate) and worked for years as a teacher and a librarian. Prof. Joma came from a big-landlord family and found employment as a professor. Lenin actually noted this phenomenon, saying that without the

intervention of revolutionary petty-bourgeois thinkers (like Marx), proletarian action cannot advance past trade-unionism. Why do you think this is? Is it true in the case of the Philippines? If so, how does the Party ensure that cadres uphold proletarian theory and practice despite their upper-class or nonproletarian origins?

MV: Indeed Lenin made the observation that revolutionary proletarian leaders will not spontaneously arise from workers' economic struggles. This is generally true, although you can cite some examples of proletarian leaders such as Crisanto Evangelista who worked as a typesetter, Ho Chi Minh who worked as a baker and cook among other jobs he did as a immigrant in France, and others who are neither professional intellectuals or academics. They studied, embraced and imbibed the proletarian class ideology (Marxism) and applied it to their concrete social and historical conditions.

History has shown that in any revolution, revolutionary theory must first be drawn from previous experience, in order to draw up a program for revolutionary action that can be put forward for the masses to act upon. The correctness of the program is tested by the extent that it is embraced by the masses as their own. In the course of revolutionary action, intellectuals from the working class emerge and grow in number, joining the Party and undergoing training as cadres and leaders. To maintain fidelity to proletarian ideology, the Party must ensure that its cadres continuously engage in theoretical study through formal Marxist-Leninist-Maoist education and reading programs, as well by conducting social investigation and class analysis, assessments and summing-up of experiences. They must remain deeply rooted among the working class and uphold the militant determination of the oppressed and exploited. Proletarian revolutionaries must constantly remold themselves through criticism and self-criticism, knowing how they are daily bombarded by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas. They must

consciously wage a two-line struggle. The current rectification movement, in fact, is an effort to strengthen the ideological mettle of the Party's cadres as they face great sacrifices and carry the historic tasks of the proletariat.

PC: For the benefit of our readers, please describe the rôles of the CPP, NPA, and NDFP in the context of the revolution and how they complement and relate to each other.

MV: The CPP is the party of the Filipino working class, guided by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the universal theory of the proletariat. It leads the people's democratic revolution in the Philippines that aims to end US imperialist domination and the oppressive and exploitative class rule of the big bourgeois compradors and big landlords, and the moribund semicolonial and semifeudal system. It seeks to carry out a program of national industrialization and genuine land reform, as key components to free the country from the shackles of economic backwardness, and as preparation for socialist revolution and construction.

To achieve this, the CPP leads the New People's Army to wage revolutionary armed struggle in the form of a protracted people's war following the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside. The NPA is mainly a peasant army, which establishes base areas among the peasant masses by combining the armed struggle with the agrarian revolution. The Party also strengthens the NDFP as the most concentrated expression of the national united front of democratic, progressive and patriotic classes in the Philippines. The NDFP was established in 1973 on the initiative of the CPP, and now has at least 18 allied organizations representing various classes and sectors, which support or take part in the revolutionary armed struggle.

PC: It is often said that the revolutionary movement has a "mass base in the millions." Can you give a more precise estimate? And, to begin with, what does a mass base entail—for both the individual considered a part of it and for the Party member, Red fighter, or organiser?

MV: The mass base of the revolutionary movement primarily consists of the mass organizations, and the people within the ambit of their influence and leadership. In rural areas, in particular, the mass base includes the population living within the stable areas of operation of the New People's Army, and in the territories under the authority of the people's democratic government. The mass base of the revolutionary movement currently runs to the millions but can also fluctuate owing to the fluidity of the people's war.

PC: On the subject of logistics and administration, can you give us a practical view of how the people's government and its organs function in the countryside? How does it mete out justice, collect taxes, marshal resources, and so on? Where do the CPP, NPA, and NDFP come in?

MV: Organs of the people's democratic government (PDG) draw its authority from the mass base. The Barrio Revolutionary Committee or corresponding organs at the municipal or interbarrio level are elected in conferences, either at large or by representatives, depending on the military situation. It forms subcommittees on organization, education, economy, defense and health. It can also form other subcommittees for cultural work or for local arbitration and justice. It implements taxation policies based on the rules for establishing the PDG. They secure the committee and PDG, the local militia unit, an NPA formation, can be mobilized, as well as village self-defense units and self-defense corps of mass organizations. Guerrilla units of the NPA can also help secure the PDG. The PDG is a form of united front, and

is established along the three-thirds (3/3) policy, with 1/3 representing the Party, 1/3 representing the basic classes, and 1/3 representing the middle forces in the village. The local Party branch or section exercises leadership over the PDG through the Party representative. The masses are encouraged to be concerned with the affairs of the PDG and supervise it through their mass organizations.

PC: November was a particularly devastating year for Filipinos on account of all the typhoons that hit, many of them record-breaking in terms of magnitude and other metrics. One killed over 100 people. What was the revolutionary forces' response to the devastation?

MV: Wherever they are established, Party branches helped mobilize the masses to carry out an organized response to the disasters, to coordinate resources for emergency relief, and to fight for their rights to just compensation from the state. In areas with units of the NPA, Red fighters assist in rebuilding homes and restoring farm plots, to help alleviate the sufferings of the masses in times of disasters.

PC: What would a negotiated peace look like? What are the chances of such a peace now?

MV: The Hague Declaration of 1992 (co-signed by the NDFP and GRP) outlines what a negotiated peace can look like. It outlines the overall agenda and sequence of the talks: human rights and international humanitarian law, socioeconomic reforms, political and constitutional reforms and disposition of forces. The idea is that each substantive item is negotiated, signed and implemented in sequence, where each successful stage proves each other's commitment to resolving the roots of the armed conflict, thus creating conditions for the next stage, until the final agreement.

Since the period of Duterte, the GRP has been pushing to change the framework of the talks to collapse all parts of the peace negotiations to one "Final Agreement" along the notion of "demobilization, disarmament and reintegration" which pushes first for the surrender of the revolutionary forces before any reform is carried out.

PC: In our last interview, you said that a revolutionary cannot help but be an optimist. With all the reversals of the past few years and all the suffering that is certain to come, do you still stand by that?

MV: Revolutionaries are eternal optimists, even in the face of adversity and difficulties. Their optimism is grounded from a firm conviction that to break the chains of oppression, the exploited classes of workers and other toiling people have no other option but to rise in revolution. Revolutionaries are eternal optimists because they have a firm grasp of the basic class contradictions of the moribund semicolonial and semifeudal system in the Philippines, and know that these need to be resolved in order to unleash the forces of progress. Revolutionaries are optimists because they are selfless. They are willing to give everything for the revolution, knowing that even if they could not personally witness ultimate victory, all their sacrifices will bear the fruit of a socialist future to be reaped and cherished by a liberated people.

Revolutionary optimism stems from a dialectical understanding of the world, recognizing that all things are in a constant state of flux and transformation. At each stage of the struggle, a revolutionary employs critical thinking to analyze and take stock of the situation and identify the key tasks to advance the revolution. We are optimistic that the current rectification movement will propel the Party and revolutionary movement forward in the next year and coming years.

KA JESS PREPARES A MODEST LUNCH DURING A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. DECEMBER 2068. *JO TANIERLA, 2025*

endnotes

[1] *Calming the Long War in the Philippine Countryside*, no. 338 (International Crisis Group, 2024), https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/philippines/338-calming-long-war-philippine-countryside.

[2] Kathleen Weekley, "From Vanguard to Rearguard: The Theoretical Roots of the Crisis of the Communist Party of the Philippines," in *The Revolution Falters: The Left in Philippine Politics After 1986*, ed. Patricio N. Abinales, Southeast Asia Program, v. SEAP 15 (Cornell University Press, 2018), 28.

[3] "Interview with Joma Sison on Turning 75, Peace and Duterte as President," *Davao Today*, February 8, 2014, https://davaotoday.com/politics/interview-with-joma-sison-on-turning-75-peace-and-duterte-as-president/.

[4] Lucia Tangi, "People's War, People's Press: History and Evolution of Ang Bayan (The People), the News Organ of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)," Plaridel: A Journal of Communications, Media, and Society 12, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.52518/2015.12.1-04tangi, 86.

[5] María Lourdes Barros, "Young Activists Express Great 'Optimism in Building a New and Better World' during Launch of Sison's Latest Book 'On the Communist Party of the Philippines,'" Philippine Revolution Web Central, February 7, 2022, https://philippinerevolution.nu/statements/young-activists-express-great-optimism-in-building-a-new-and-better-world-during-launch-of-sisons-latest-book-on-the-communist-party-of-the-philippines/.

[6] Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines, "Rectify Errors and Strengthen the Party! Unite and Lead the Broad Masses of the Filipino People in Fighting the US-Marcos Regime! Advance the People's Democratic Revolution!," *Ang Bayan*, December 26, 2023, Special Issue, https://philippinerevolution.nu/statements/rectify-errors-and-strengthen-the-party-unite-and-lead-the-broad-masses-of-the-filipino-people-in-fighting-the-us-marcos-regime-advance-the-peoples-democratic-revolution/, 9.

[7] Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines, "Fight to Hasten the Ouster of the Arroyo Regime and Strengthen the Revolutionary Movement," *Ang Bayan*, March 29, 2006, Special Issue, https://philippinerevolution.nu/1998-2005/angbayan/archives/2006/060329en.zip, 5.

[8] Central Committee, "Rectify Errors," 3.

[9] Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos, "PH Gov't, NDF Agree to Principled, Peaceful Armed Conflict Resolution," Philippine News Agency, November 28, 2023, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1214488.

[10] Alejandro Lichauco, "The Roots of Crisis: A Neo-Colonial State," *Bulatlat* 4, no. 40 (2004), https://www.bulatlat.com/news/4-40/4-40-roots.html.

interview no. 2

N.B.—Originally published as "An interview with the Communist Party of the Philippines on its 53rd anniversary" on my Web-site, now *Tapilók-bángon*, on 26 December 2021: https://pao-chingming.neocities.org/kamarcointerview20211226.

Pao Ching-ming: Before anything else, may you provide us with a brief history of the Filipino people's struggle for liberation, from the earliest scattered risings under the Spanish yoke to the national-democratic revolution currently being waged against imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism?

Marco Valbuena: On the occasion of the anniversary of Lapulapu's uprising on April 27, 1521, we marked earlier this year 500 years of Philippine armed resistance against foreign aggressors. Although the Lapulapu uprising was victorious, the disparate islands would ultimately be suppressed by the Spanish colonizers with superior military force representing a more advanced social and economic system. I invite you to review the April 21, 2021 editorial of *Ang Bayan*, the CPP's official news organ, which described in broad strokes the development of Philippine history as a continuum of armed uprisings to fight for national liberation.[1]

To understand the nature of these armed uprisings, it is important to also delve into the class nature and theories that guided these. During the first stage of more than three hundred years of anticolonial resistance, the big and small, short-lived and prolonged armed uprisings, were mostly local and of limited scale. Many of these were mostly led by local landowners whose interests were trampled upon by the colonizers and their demand for tribute. They were in a position to lead the local masses

in armed uprisings, but were no match to the superior military force which the colonizers could concentrate on a local area.

The emergence of the Propaganda Movement in the latter part of the 19th century gave all these local uprisings a national character, although Rizal and others actually sought to attain reforms under the colonial regime. Bonifacio was of working class origin but was inspired by bourgeois ideals as expressed by Rizal's exposition of the Filipino national identity and the slogans of the French revolution for freedom, brotherhood and equality. Enlightened by bourgeois liberal concepts, he formed the Katipunan as a national resistance movement with the objective of driving away the Spanish colonizers. The bourgeois illustrado forces would soon violently take over the leadership of the revolution. The inchoate bourgeois forces in the country, however, were weak and could easily be subdued by the US imperialists.

It would take the incipient working class to pick up the banner and resume the struggle for national liberation and the armed resistance movement. At the early part of the 20th century, working class organizations which were moderately influenced by Marxism, would raise the slogan calling for an end to US colonialism. Although it could mount large demonstrations, the Filipino working class was numerically small and ideologically immature to come up with a comprehensive strategy for resistance against the imperialist adversary.

The formation of the Communist Party of the Philippine Islands in 1930 was a watershed event that marked the integration of the Filipino working class movement with the international proletarian movement under the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Communist Internationale. In the fight against Japanese armed aggression, the CPPI wisely applied united front tactics and armed struggle, forging an alliance with the

peasantry, waging guerrilla warfare, carrying out land reform and building organs of political power. The revolutionary forces under the CPPI (then merged with the Socialist Party of the Philippines) would control large swathes of territory in Central Luzon and other parts of the country. Waging people's war, however, was adapted as a tactic in the fight against Japanese fascism, and would later be discarded. The merger party had no clear analysis of the semicolonial and semifeudal conditions of the country and failed to expound on its revolutionary strategy. The CPPI was strongly influenced and led by unremolded pettybourgeois intellectuals, who, for the following decades, would swing from Right and "Left" opportunism.[2]

The revolutionary armed struggle for national and social liberation resumed in 1969 with the formation of the New People's Army by the reestablished CPP. The CPP benefited from the victorious revolutions in China and Korea (and later in Vietnam) which demonstrated the necessity of waging people's war in semicolonial and semifeudal countries, forging the basic alliance with the more numerous peasant class, and adapting guerrilla tactics to confront and defeat a militarily more superior enemy force. The CPP assiduously applied Marxism-Leninism-Maoism on the concrete conditions of the Philippines to come up with specific tactics for building a nationwide army and waging people's war in an archipelagic country. The people's war has developed and progressed over the past 50 years. It has the singular achievement of self-reliantly waging people's war at a time when the proletariat had already been defeated in China and the Soviet Union.

PC: How has the people's war progressed since the Party's reconstitution 53 years ago? Is it still in the stage of the strategic defensive as outlined by Mao and Prof. José Ma. Sison?

MV: In its message last December 26, the CPP Central Committee said that the people's war is at the middle phase or substage of the strategic defensive. During this phase, the NPA aims to complete building company-sized guerrilla fronts by waging extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare on the basis of an ever expanding and deepening mass base, and build more guerrilla fronts to further extend the revolutionary territories of the NPA. Upon completion of these requirements, the people's war will advance towards the advanced phase of the strategic defensive, where it will have the capacity to annihilate company-sized or larger armed formations of the enemy, and work towards achieving strategic stalemate with the enemy.

PC: Throughout its over half a century years of existence, the Party has maintained its basic politico-ideological integrity against revisionism and other forms of reaction and counter-revolution. Indeed, the Party's reëstablishment itself was an act of resistance and struggle against the revisionism and right-opportunism of the Lavas and other diehards of the old guard. This First Great Rectification Movement would be followed by another decades later but against the "left"-opportunism of the Lagman-type adventurists and urban insurrectionists. Even to-day, the Party stands as a bulwark against modern revisionism in the Philippines, China, and elsewhere. How has the Party kept its proletarian and anti-revisionist outlook from its founding up to the present?

MV: The Party has successfully applied and propagated Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and transformed it into an invincible material force. It has succeeded in cultivating deep class loyalty to the proletarian cause among its cadres and members. Most of the Party's members come from the oppressed classes of workers and peasants who are the most desirous to wage revolution. Party cadres from the pettybourgeoisie undergo self-remolding by

integrating themselves with the oppressed classes. All Party members, including leading cadres, belong to basic Party branches, where they shoulder common tasks in Party building and engage in criticism and self-criticism. The Party implements a three level Party course: basic, intermediate and advanced, as well as a special study course, where Party members deepen their knowledge of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism from one level to the next. Party members are taught to carry out social investigation, assessments, drawing conclusions from facts, and methods of planning to scientifically raise the level of their practice.

The Party always maintains a high degree of vigilance against modern revisionism, and other counterrevolutionary trends that seek to undermine the proletarian viewpoint and standpoint of the Party and its cadres. It engages in polemical or theoretical debate with both Right and "Left" opportunists who seek to either draw the Party to collaborationism, liquidationism or sectarianism.

PC: Is it a negative attitude to act as if people's war, the triumph of revolution, and other such positive outcomes are inevitable? Or is this simply an expression of revolutionary optimism?

MV: I think communists and revolutionaries are irrepressible optimists. This is not blind optimism, or merely waiting for the inevitable, rather from the dialectical materialist attitude that laws governing change are knowable and ultimately controllable by people. Thus, revolutionaries always have the attitude of turning a negative situation into positive, and not being complacent after victories or achievements. This optimism is rooted from a scientific outlook and method of always analyzing the two aspects of a situation, and determining the dialectical laws that govern the process of change of a thing, in order to plan an intervention to

attain the desired outcome. From the outset, many of the Party's victories amid great adversity would not have been achieved without large doses of revolutionary optimism.

PC: As I have mentioned in my previous talk with Prof. Joma[3], the prospects of the coming election seem most unfavourable. Of the major presidential candidates thus far, only the rejectionist-revisionist Leody has offered detailed and actually progressive policies. In terms of their determination to dismantle or at least struggle against policies favourable to US imperialism and feudalism, the liberal Robredo and the fascist-descended Marcos are basically the same insofar as both are uninterested in any such thing. The former, for instance, continues to vacillate between promising to maintain the terroristic National Task Force to "End" Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) as it is and guaranteeing nebulous reforms to it. In light of the current situation, what is the Party's perspective and policy on electoralism?

MV: As Ka Joma and the Party has previously explicated, the CPP is not governed by the legal political processes of the reactionary system. The Party, through the NPA, wages armed revolution towards the overthrow of the ruling state, and as such, is automatically disqualified from taking part in the ruling system's electoral contest.

The reactionary elections form part of the ruling system's method of maintaining the ruling system. It is the method for determining who among the rival reactionary cliques will control the government and all its resources. It is also a means to perpetuate the ruling system by making people believe that democracy exists and it is the people who choose their leaders. In fact, only their reactionary parties and organizations can effectively participate in the elections.

The national democratic organizations and parties who exist under the 1987 constitution, can take part in the reactionary elections to use it as a platform to promote the national democratic program, forge political alliances and win seats in the parliament or local and national positions. They can do so without promoting illusions of democracy under the reactionary system.

PC: Women and Queer people have long been oppressed by the colonial and feudal patriarchal order perpetuated by the local ruling classes and their imperialist masters. The proliferation of the imperialist sex trade and the murder of women and baklâ at the hands of the foreign devils—the martyred Jennifer Laude being one of the most prominent victims in recent years—are proof enough of their continued oppression. How has the Party insured their equal treatment, as well as the abolition of the means by which they are exploited?

MV: The cause of women and the LQBT community against discrimination and oppression is enshrined in the Party's constitution and program. The provision pertaining to LGBT rights was inserted in the revised Party constitution as approved in the 2nd Congress in 2016. Equal rights of gay and lesbians to relations and marriage have been recognized since 1992. The Party and NPA regularly hold discussions to raise the awareness of its members and fighters about the issue of gender oppression, and to constantly remind them of the need to do away with stereotypes. Gays and lesbians have become responsible commanders of the NPA, and leaders of the Party.

PC: How does the Party engage with its religious cadres and allied organisations and religion as a whole?

The Party forges friendly relations with progressive religious forces. Of course, religious idealism and Marxist

materialism are diametrically opposed world views. However, the emergence of a progressive-minded movement within different denominations has made possible an alliance between communists and some religious on the basis of a common aspiration for liberating people from oppression and exploitation.

PC: What are the rôles of the NPA and the NDF in the CPP-led national-democratic revolution? What organisations comprise the NDF?

MV: The NPA and the NDF are both instruments developed by the Party for fighting the enemy. The Party leads the NPA as its principal weapon for destroying the enemy's armed forces which is the main force for preserving the reactionary state. Through the NDF, the Party forges the broadest alliance of class and sectoral forces to generate support for the armed revolution and isolate the enemy politically. Amado Guerrero describes the NPA and NDF as the Party's spear and shield, for offense and defense. You can also say that both are weapons for waging integrated military and political struggles.

The NDF is composed of underground revolutionary mass organizations that support the armed revolution. It is a united front for armed struggle. There are at least 17 mass organizations among the youth, workers, peasants, fisherfolk, women, semiproletariat, migrant workers, scientists, artists, overseas Filipinos, cultural workers, and so on. The Party helped form these organizations to draw in the advanced activists among the different mass movements.

PC: The super-typhoon Odette, known abroad as "Rai," has proven itself one of the most catastrophic disasters nationally since Yolanda. In the face of mass disruptions in electrical and water services, the reactionary

government seated in Manila has essentially left the suffering masses on their own. What measures have the Party and its affiliated organisations taken to aid Odette-stricken communities?

MV: As in past calamities, local Party branches organize and mobilize the people in the villages to collectively respond to their needs, mobilize resources, coordinate with other villages and with relief organizations, as well as with state agencies and distribute resources equitably. The Party has also directed units of the NPA to serve as first responders, and to assist the people in rehabilitation and recovery work. Red fighters help survivors in rebuilding or repairing their homes, especially of senior citizens, repairing farms and organizing production brigades to assist in planting. At the same time, the Party rouses the people to demand the reactionary state for its typically slow and meager response to the disaster and to hold it responsible for the neglect of its duties.

PC: As the vanguard of the Filipino people, the Party must be at the forefront of the mass movement for genuinely new, proletarian art, literature, and culture against the art, literature, and culture of the old bourgeois colonial and feudal system. Journals and publications like *Ulós* and *Tilamsík* are good examples of this revolution in culture. How has the Party furthered the development and enrichment of all fields of human endeavour, including the sciences, towards liberation and socialism?

MV: The Party's program stipulates the promotion of a national, scientific and mass culture as a key component of the revolutionary struggle. The material conditions brought about by revolutionary struggles have generated a slew of cultural forms of expression in the villages, in the people's army, in the democratic mass movement, as well as in the digital space. Organizations of cultural workers have sprouted and through these, cultural work is being carried out more systematically and prevalently,

popularizing works of art and literature among the masses, mobilizing them and raising standards. Cultural work is most vigorous in areas where the masses are active in agrarian revolution and wage antifascist and other democratic struggles. Heroes and martyrs from among the local revolutionaries are recognized and promoted as models for emulation. The Party promotes the scientific method of thinking, observation and analysis in all fields of endeavor. In production, it draws from the practice of the masses, while encouraging scientific experiment, and the integration of advanced scientific knowledge and technologies, to promote and further improve these practices, for example, in the use of organic material as fertilizers. Science and technologies are also used in the New People's Army to develop new weaponries, as well as in propaganda, education and organizing work.

PC: 12 million Filipinos—over a tenth of all Filipinos—reside abroad as migrant workers, students, naturalised citizens, or all three. Prof. Joma, in our recent discussion, said of the diasporic population: "The national-democratic movement has done excellent work in arousing, organizing and mobilizing the overseas Filipinos in so many countries..."[4] How exactly does the movement, and the Party specifically, go about arousing, organising, and mobilising the diaspora?

MV: The Party promotes the rights and aspirations of overseas Filipinos. It supports their struggles, especially against government neglect and fleecing them of fees and taxes. The Party considers Filipinos abroad playing an important role in exposing the semicolonial and semifeudal conditions in the Philippines and promoting the national democratic cause.

To organize Filipinos abroad, the Party and revolutionary forces establish contacts with Filipino communities and form Party cells and underground

organizations. Revolutionary forces in the Philippines are encouraged to raise the political consciousness of their relatives abroad and link them up with Party branches and revolutionary organizations. The Kabataang Makabayan has several chapters in Europe and the US. Communication technologies have facilitated and accelerated efforts in organizing and linking Filipinos abroad with the revolutionary forces in the country.

PC: How does the Party view and exercise proletarian internationalism in light of the 150-plus-year experience of communists worldwide, particularly with the Comintern and the so-called Revolutionary Internationalist Movement?[5]

MV: The Party believes that at this stage in the development of the international communist movement, the most crucial task is to build or strengthen communist parties by applying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism on the concrete conditions of particular countries. Proletarian revolutionaries must emerge or step up in their efforts to build a communist party capable of organizing and leading the masses in their numbers. Proletarian revolutionaries can develop linkages to exchange experiences, analysis and views, with the aim of raising the level of revolutionary practice. The face of the international communist movement will change with the qualitative development of revolutionary movements and the new global surge of socialist revolution that will require new forms of cooperation and organization of the international proletariat.

PC: On the subject of internationalism, what is the present outlook of the Party on the upsurge of revolution abroad? What anti-imperialist parties does it lend its support and solidarity to? And lastly, how may foreign comrades help the revolutionary movement in the Philippines?

MV: Worsening conditions under continuing imperialist crisis are ever favorable for a renewed resurgence of anti-imperialist and socialist revolution on a global scale. We can say that we are at the threshold of a resurgence of socialist and national democratic revolutions.

The Party and the national democratic forces in the Philippines have been extending solidarity and all possible support within their capacity to anti-imperialist movements around the world. These include raising the awareness of the Filipino people about anti- imperialist and national and social liberation movements, mounting mass actions, issuing declarations and statements, sending delegations to events, and so on.

Throughout its history, countless internationalists have supported and joined the revolutionary movement in the Philippines. They have extended material, political and moral support. Not a few have joined the New People's Army as Red fighters.

PC: Following the presumed triumph of the national-democratic Revolution, how will the Party adhere to the principle of self-determination for distinct nationalities and ethnicities such as the Moro people in Mindanao? Are there prospects for a centralised union of republics as was established in the Soviet Union, or should we look forward to a structure wholly different from ones past? Alternatively, is it perhaps futile to attempt to predict how the precise details of self-determination shall play out in the future?

MV: The Party upholds the principle of the right to self-determination of the Moro people and other minority groups in the Philippines. It builds unity with the different minority groups in the struggle against the common enemy that oppresses the Filipino people and minority groups, and supports their cause for separation

or autonomy from the oppressive state.

The CPP's program elaborates on the matter, to wit:

> The Party and the people's democratic government shall always uphold the national and democratic rights of the national minorities who compose 15 percent of the Philippine population. The national minorities shall be encouraged to take their rightful role and place in the people's democratic state and shall receive special consideration because of the extreme oppression and exploitation that they have suffered for so long in the hands of Spanish colonialism, US imperialism and the local reactionary classes. The Bangsamoro people, the largest national minority in the Philippines, have long developed their national self-identity and persevere in their struggle for self-determination.
>
> The Party leads the struggle against national oppression. The revolutionary forces must grow in strength among the national minorities and foster unity, cooperation and coordination between them and the rest of the people in combating the brutal campaigns of armed oppression, the grabbing of land from them, the plunder of natural resources in their areas, the imposition of absurdly low wages in plantations and mines, the paucity or lack of a just share in the social wealth and taxes produced from their areas, and all other phenomena of abuse, chauvinism and discrimination.
>
> A new type of leadership, a revolutionary one, must be encouraged to rise from the national minorities so as to transform the traditional leadership and supplant those that have not only failed to fight for their rights but has also participated in their exploitation. Cadres of the Party and the revolution must be developed from among the national minorities.[6]

PC: What do you think of the anti-Red and anti-progressive hysteria whipped up by the Government? What state-propagated lies in particular must be dispelled from the minds of the people?

MV: The enemy has been whipping-up "anti-terrorism" in a desperate bid to justify its counterrevolutionary war. This line aims to obscure the national and democratic aspirations of the Filipino people. It cries "terrorism" to cover up its use of state terrorism in its intensified war against civilians, especially in the form of aerial bombardment, strafing and artillery shelling.

Since the early 2000s, US imperialism has promoted "anti-terrorism" as a quasi-legal framework to justify its armed aggression and interventionism around the world.

PC: Is Sabah still considered by the Party as a rightful territory of the Philippines? Does the Party conduct political, military, and mass work there?

MV: There is historical basis for the Philippine claim to Sabah, a territory of the Sulu Sultanate that was ceded to the Philippine government in 1962, but which was wrested by the British imperialists with the incorporation of Malaysia in 1963 on the pretext of fighting communism and so-called Indonesian expansionism. The so-called referendum is invalid as it was carried out under conditions of coercion. Legal definition of Philippine baseline territory in 1968 included Sabah and the seas surrounding it. In 2011, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that the Philippine claim is valid and can be pursued in the future. The problem is that successive Philippine reactionary governments have been legally negligent since the 1960s as a way of bowing to US foreign policy. The Party has previously declared that upon establishment, the people's democratic government of the Philippines can pursue these legal claims and seek to resolve this in favor of the country and the people of Sabah.

Filipinos in Sabah suffer grave oppression. Most of them work in oil palm plantations as farm workers. Many

of them are considered stateless and illegal aliens and are made to suffer from lower wages, and lack of rights to domicile, access to public service and so on. They desire to assert their rights, as well as Philippine claims over the territory, and are linking up with the national democratic forces in the Philippines.

PC: With more than 120 languages and even more dialects among them, the Philippines is one of the most linguistically diverse nations in the world. How does the Party deal with communications amid such diversity of language?

MV: The Party promotes Filipino or Pilipino as a national language and as the principal medium of instruction and official communication, as well as local languages, to benefit the masses. The Party ensures that its news organ, *Ang Bayan*, is translated into the major languages and can be read by the majority of its mass base. In fact, *Ang Bayan* is the only newspaper in the country that is available in six languages: Pilipino, English, Binisaya, Iloco, Waray and Hiligaynon. Party documents, audio-video information materials, and Marxist-Leninist-Maoist study materials are also translated to local languages.

PC: The reactionary Government and its imperialist overlords, through various official and quasi-official research and policy institutes, claim that only 30% of the population are peasants and that their contribution to the economy is only 12%. They furthermore insist that no more than a fifth of the people live in poverty. Ignoring, or perhaps supporting, the political, ideological, and class motivations behind the methods through which such data were found, pseudo-progressives and anti-people technocrats alike make the case that material conditions no longer align with the analysis of Philippine society

originally put forth by Prof. Sison, which analysis is still upheld by the revolutionary movement. How does the Party counter these claims?

MV: You are correct in pointing out how the reactionary government's statisticians and technocrats present a skewed image of social realities in the Philippines. Their views are supported by a slew of International Monetary Fund/World Bank-trained academics, as well as by some pettybourgeois reformist groups. Their objective is to undermine the Party's analysis of the semicolonial and semifeudal conditions, where production largely remains backward, agrarian and non-industrial. They do so by understating the share of agricultural output and the rural population to make the false claim of predominance of capitalist production and relations. They rely on formalistic categories of employment which does not count the value produced by women peasants (who are categorized as unemployed despite the fact that they work in the fields as much as their husbands) and young peasants (who are productive at a very young age) effectively reducing by more than half the agricultural workforce in the country. They further discount the natural economy that continues to constitute a large part of the rural production. They also bloat the urban population by claiming even fifth-class municipal centers, when in fact, these are mostly linked to the rural economy (as agri-commercial centers) rather than to capitalist production. Government technocrats also use statistical magic to reduce the number of people under the threshold of poverty and hunger, by pulling down standards of living and food requirements. They do the same manipulation of numbers to understate the true state of unemployment in the country.

The Party counters these claims through exposition of the various aspects of the concrete conditions in the Philippines. Researches are conducted and articles written to describe the state of the semicolonial and semifeudal system in the country. *Ang Bayan* regularly

features articles that expose the backward state of Philippine agriculture and the oppression and exploitation of the peasant masses. Studies are being conducted on the extent of landlessness and the degree of land monopoly ownership. Territorial committees of the Party at various levels are tasked to come up with updated social investigations of the situation within their scope. Prof. Sison's articles discussing the objective conditions in the country are invaluable resources.

National democratic organizations among workers and peasants, as well as other sectors, as well as research outfits, also continually come up with articles and research materials which discuss the concrete situation of the broad toiling masses. They easily counter the fantastical claims of reduced poverty in the Philippines.

endnotes

[1] Central Committee, Communist Party of the Philippines, "Celebrate Five Centuries of Armed Resistance," *Ang Bayan*, December 26, 2023, Vol. 52, No. 8, https://philippinerevolution.nu/2021/04/21/ang-bayan-april-21-2021/.

[2] See also José Ma. Sison, "On the Experience of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Combatting Modern Revisionism and Opportunism," in *The Filipino People's Democratic Revolution Is Invincible*, ed. Julieta de Lima, Selected Writings (2022; International Network for Philippine Studies, 2023). Another copy is in *Revisionism and Counterrevolution*, ed. J. De Lima, Sison Reader Series #28 (INPS, 2024). Also on-line under a very slightly different title: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359175464_On_the_Experience_of_the_Communist_Party_of_the_Philippines_Against_Counterrevolution_Modern_Revisionism_and_Opportunism_by_Prof_Jose_Maria_Sison. I was supposed to deliver my own lecture after Prof. Joma's but couldn't, as I had procrastinated on it until the last one or two hours before the actual event, which was a theoretico-practical forum held by comrades in Pakistan.

[3] José Ma. Sison, "On Various Current Issues," interview by Pao Ching-ming, in *Imperialism in Turmoil, Socialism in Prospect*, ed. Julieta de Lima, Selected Writings (2021; International Network for Philippine Studies, 2022), https://pao-chingming.neocities.org/jomainterview20211124.

[4] Sison, "On Various Current Issues."

[5] See Ajith, *Against Avakianism*, 5th printing, Colorful Classics, #9 (Foreign Languages Press, 2021), https://foreignlanguages.press/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/S09-Against-Avakianism-5th-Printing.pdf. See also the RIM archive on Banned Thought: https://www.bannedthought.net/International/RIM/index.htm

[6] Communist Party of the Philippines, "Program for a People's Democratic Revolution," in *Constitution and Program* (2016; Central Committee, 2018), https://philippinerevolution.nu/2016/11/07/cpp-constitution-and-program/, 86.

PEASANT WOMAN RISES UP. ***WRATH OF THE SERFS, 1976.***

Pao Ching-ming is an 18-year-old eunuch-autist from Quezon City, the Philippines.